

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL MILAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5262

AMEMBASSY ROME

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TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: MILAN CONSULAR DISTRICT SOCIALISTS: CRAXI SAFE...

FOR MOMENT

1. 1. SUMMARY. NORTHERN ITALIAN SOCIALIST OFFICIALS TELL US ROME PSI DECISION TO VOTE AGAINST SENDING FORMER PM RUMOR UP BEFORE PARLIAMENT ON LOCKHEED CHARGES WAS LARGE TACTICAL MISTAKE. MEMBERSHIP EVERYWHERE IS UP IN ARMS, CENTRAL COMMITTEE UNITY SHATTERED, AND CRAXI'S CAREFUL WORK TO NUTURE PARTY BACK TO HEALTH AT LEAST TEMPORARILY UNDONE. OFFICIALS HOPE DAMAGE CAN BE CONTAINED, AND FEEL CRAXI NOT IN DANGER AT MOMENT. THEY DISAGREE ON WHO BEARS CULPABILITY WITHIN ROME PSI LEADERSHIP FOR EXPLOITING CRAXI'S PREDICAMENT, BUT THEY WANT BICKERING TO STOP. THEY ALSO DISAGREE ON WHETHER PCI IS HAPPY OR SAD OVER SITUATION. ONE VERDICT SURE: NORTHERN ITALIAN SOCIALIST SUPPORT FOR RETURN TO CENTER-LEFT GOVERNMENT, UNLIKELY BEFORE, IS NOW UNTHINKABLE. END SUMMARY.

2. SOCIALIST OFFICIALS IN MILAN CONSULAR DISTRICT HAVE TOLD US PSI RANK AND FILE REACTION TO PSI ROME'S DECISION TO VOTE AGAINST SENDING RUMOR/LOCKHEED CASE TO FULL
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PARLIAMENT HAS BEEN EXPLOSIVE. PSI LEADERSHIP HAD GRAVELY UNDERESTIMATED FEELING AGAINST DC AND, IN PARTICULAR, MEMBERSHIP'S INDIGNATION AT WHAT MIGHT APPEAR FROM WITHOUT TO BE POLITICAL DEAL BETWEEN SOCIALISTS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. PSI LOMBARDY REGIONAL SECRETARY GABRIELE BACCALINI TOLD US LEADERSHIP KNEW THAT MOOD WITHIN PARTY WAS ANTI-DC AND THAT DECISION IN RUMOR' FAVOR WOULD

PROVOKE REACTION, BUT UNDERESTIMATED PROPORTIONS OF OUTBURST. PSI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY GIULIO FERRARINI OF PARMA, WHERE SOME 3000 UNHAPPY SOCIALISTS TURNED OUT FEBRUARY 25 TO HEAR CRAXI SPEAK, CALLED LOCAL REACTION AGAINST DECISION "TOUGH AND SPONTANEOUS".

3. PSI OFFICIALS HERE AT SAME TIME TREATED INCIDENT AS UNFORTUNATE MISTAKE PARTY MUST WORK TO CONTAIN (AND CERTAIN SPOILERS MUST REFRAIN FOR EXACERBATING) RATHER THAN DISAGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLE WITHIN LEADERSHIP. MANTUA PSI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY VLADIMIRO BERTAZZONI SAID HE WAS SATISFIED WITH EXPLANATION CRAXI GAVE HIM FRIDAY IN PARMA FOR WAY DECISION WAS REACHED, THOUGH HE THOUGHT PSI PARLIAMENTARIANS SHOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT FREE TO VOTE AS THEY WISHED. OTHER OFFICIALS CRITICIZED ACHILLE, SIGNORILE AND OTHERS FOR NOT HAVING MAINTAINED SOLID FRONT ONCE DIRECTORATE REACHED DECISION (THEY REVEALED PUBLICLY THAT THEY DISAGREED WITH MAJORITY). SEVERAL OF OUR CONTACTS-LIKE MANTUA SECRETARY BERTAZZONI AND LEFT-WING PSI CITY ALDERMAN UMBERTO DRAGONE-SAW PRESS AND PCI PARTIES AS RUSHING IN TO EXPLOIT PSI PLIGHT. CONSENSUS IN ANY CASE WAS THAT MATTER WAS UNFORTUNATE MISCALCULATION, NOT SPLIT ON PRINCIPLE.

4. WE FOUND OUR CONTACTS AGREEING THAT IT WOULD BE GRAVE MISTAKE TO USE INCIDENT AS EXCUSE TO GO AFTER CRAXI AND THAT CRAXI WAS, IN FACT, IN NO IMMEDIATE MORTAL DANGER THOUGH HE HAD ABSORBED BLACK EYE OR TWO. PARMA PSI SECRETARY DESCRIBED LARGE CROWD ON HAND TO HEAR CRAXI FRIDAY AS ANGRY MOST OF ALL AT DE MARTINO AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MANCINI (I.E. THOSE KNOWN TO WANT TO MOVE CLOSER TO DC) AND ONLY SECONDARILY AT CRAXI (FOR ALLEGEDLY ALLOWING THEIR VIEW TO PREVAIL IN RUMOR DECISION). MILAN PSI PROVINCIAL VICE-SECRETARY MAURISIO RICOTTI SAID PSI LEFT WING WOULD LIKE CRAXI REPLACED BUT HE THOUGHT PROSPECT UNLIKELY. UMBERTO DRAGONE, VERY IMPORTANT IN MILAN PSI LEFT WING, SAID FLATLY THERE WAS NO MOVE AFOOT TO UNSEAT CRAXI. NOR DID LOMBARDY REGIONAL SECRETARY BACCALINI (MANCA SUPPORTER) BELIEVE CRAXI WAS IN TROUBLE.

5. WHAT DID CONCERN OUR CONTACTS WAS APPARENT BREAKDOWN OF UNITY WITHIN PSI DIRECTORATE IN ROME. BACCALINI SAW POSSIBILITY THAT SOME CRAXI COMPETITION MIGHT USE THIS AS OCCASION TO PULL OFF COUP AS MOST URGENT OF PSI'S POTENTIAL PROBLEMS. PARMA SECRETARY FERRARINI AGREED THAT DISARRAY AT TOP WAS UNSETTLING. IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR DIRECTORATE TO PULL ITSELF TOGETHER FAST.

6. WHAT ABOUT ILL-CONCEALED AMBITIONS OF PSI VICE-SECRETARY ENRICO MANCA? ALTHOUGH ONE

CONTACT CITED MANCA'S PERSONAL DISTASTE FOR CRAXI AS GOOD INDICATION MANCA WAS EXPLOITING CURRENT SITUATION TO FULLEST AGAINST CRAXI, OTHERS CALLED MANCA'S CONDUCT IN CIRCUMSTANCES RESPONSIBLE. LAMBARDY SECRETARY BACCALINI, MANCA SUPPORTER WHO SAID HD HAD SPENT PREVIOUS DAY IN COMO WITH PSI VICE-SECRETARY, SAID MANCA WAS GENUINELY DISTRESSED OVER PUBLIC DECLARATION OF ACHILLE AND SIGNORILE CRITICIZING DIRECTORATE'S DECISION, WHICH HE AHD LEARNED ONLY FROM NEWSPAPER. SUBSEQUENTLY, MANCA HAD CALLED FOR UNDERSTANDING FOR DIRECTORATE'S POSITION. BACCALINI CALLED CRAXI' PRESENT STRAITS "SLIP ON BANANA PEEL" WHICH MANCA HAD NO THOUGHT OF TRYING TO EXPLOIT. "AFTER ALL, NEXT MONTH MANCA COULD BE IN SIMILAR POSITION."

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7. WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES OF LATEST PSI MISSTEP?
RICOTTI PUT IT SUCCINCTLY AS FAR AS ANY RETURN TO COLLABORATION WITH DC CONCERNED. PSI RANK AND FILE REACTION, HE SAID, NOW MAKES IMPOSSIBLE WHAT BEFORE WAS ONLY IMPROBABLE. CRAXI HAD NOW NECESSARILY BEEN PUSHED FURTHER TO LEFT. PARTY'S LEFT WING (I.E. PARTY'S MOST ANTI - DC ELEMENT) HAD BEEN STRENGTHENED, AND DE MARTINO-MANCINI PEOPLE HAD BEEN DEALT SEVERE BLOW.

8. AND HOW WAS PCI FARING IN ALL THIS? MIXED WITH FAIRLY GENERAL RESENTMENT THAT PCI HAD ONCE AGAIN LEFT SOCIALISTS HOLDING BAG WAS GRUDGING ADMIRATION-ON GABRIELE BACCALINI'S PART AT LEAST -THAT COMMUNISTS HAD AVOIDED MISTAKE OF NOT CONSULTING MEMBERSHIP BEFORE MAKING DECISION ON RUMOR VOTE. IN FACT, HE SAID, PCI LEADERSHIP WAS DIVIDED ON ISSUE AND

RANK AND FILE SOUNDINGS WERE BASIS ON WHICH THEY RESOLVED THEIR DILEMMA. UMBERTO DRAGONE AGREED THAT PCI DECISION MADE ON BASIS OF INTERNAL PARTY CONSIDERATION ALONE, SINCE COMMUNISTS KNEW VOTE WOULD FAVOR RUMOR AND WERE THUS IN POSITION TO CAST VOTES AGAINST HIM WITHOUT DOING ANY REAL DAMAGE.

9. SOME OF OUR CONTACTS FELT AT SAME TIME THAT FUROR SOCIALIST POSITION HAD UNLEASHED WITHIN PSI WAS NOT IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMMUNISTS' INTEREST. REASONING WAS THAT STRENGTHENING OF PSI LEFT WING WILL SERVE TO EMBARRASS PCI, INTENT ON BEING MODERATE, BY MAKING IT COMPETE WITH POSITIONS TO LEFT OF ITS OWN. FURTHERMORE, ADDED PARMA SECRETARY, VOTE AGAINST RUMOR HAS PUT STITK IN SPOKES OF PCI RELATIONSHIP WITH DC, THUS UNDOING MANY MONTHS OF BRIDGEBUILDING, IN HIS OPINION.

10. COMMENT. OUTCRY WITHIN PSI HAS SERVED NOT ONLY TO BURY ALL THOUGHT-OF WHICH THERE WAS LITTLE ENOUGH TO BEGIN WITH- AMONG MILAN CONSULAR DISTRICT SOCIALIST LEADERS OF EVENTUAL RETURN TO COALITION WITH DC, BUT ALSO TO LAY BARE FRAGILE CONSENSUS UPON WHICH POSITION OF CRAXI AS NATIONAL SECRETARY RESTS. LATTER RESULT IS ALARMING ONE FOR ALL THOSE-AND THEY ARE VAST MAJORITY OF SOCIALISTS HERE-WHO HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED AT SLOW RETURN TO HEALTH THAT PARTY HAS BEGUN UNDER CRAXI.

11. THUS THERE IS LITTLE OR NO SUPPORT AMONG PARTY OFFICIALS TO UNSEAT PRESENT SECRETARY. ON CONTRARY, WE HAVE FOUND DETERMINATION -AMONG LEADERS AND PROBABLY AMONG RANK AND FILE AS WELL-THAT PRESENT DISARRAY MUST QUICKLY BE PUT IN ORDER AND CRAXI CONTINUE WHAT HE HAS BEGUN. THAT MEANS CONCRETELY THAT LOCAL LEADERS WANT CRAXI, MANCA, SIGNORILE, ET AL TO PATCH UP (OR OVER) THEIR DIFFERENCES-WHICH ARE BELIEVED TO BE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL RATHER THAN POLICY RELATED-AND GET BACK TO WORK. THEY HAVE LARGELY GIVEN UP ON DE MARTINO AND MANCINI, WHOM THEY WOULD GLADLY SEE REMOVED FROM SCENE ALTOGETHER.

12. AS CRAXI'S ACCIDENTIS SEEN IN MILAN, IT IS FURTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR PCI TO EXPLOIT ONE OF ITS MOST SIGNIFICANT POST-WAR VICTORIES: THAT OF DESTROYING DC-SOCIALIST ALLIANCE EMBODIED IN CENTRO-SINISTRA. THERE CAN BE FEW HIGHER PRIORITIES FOR PCI THAN PREVENTING RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DC-SOCIALIST COOPERATION AND, TO JUDGE BY LOCAL REPORTS, PCI IS AT WORK TO ASSURE THAT LOCKHEED INCIDENT FURTHER TURNS PSI AWAY FROM DC.FINA

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